

U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop issued the following statement on the loss of the space shuttle Columbia and its crew:

"Every Georgian I've talked to since the crash of Columbia feels the terrible shock and sorrow that I'm feeling over the loss of the seven gifted, courageous people who were aboard, each risking his and her life to explore the difficult and dangerous frontier of space and advance the boundaries of understanding for all humanity.

"The Columbia's crew would be the first to say our commitment to space exploration should not waver. Space flights play a vitally important role in expanding our scientific knowledge and ensuring the security of our country and the free world. While a tragedy of this magnitude demands a thorough investigation, and a top-to-bottom review of how the space program is run and where it is headed, we should strive to fix the problems and get a sound program up and running again as soon as possible. No memorial to the fallen astronauts could be more meaningful than this.

"Today, we mourn their loss-and pledge to them that their long range mission shall ultimately be achieved and their sacrifice shall not have been in vain."